

AN  
ADDRESS  
FROM THE  
GENERAL COMMITTEE  
OF  
ROMAN CATHOLICS,  
TO THEIR  
PROTESTANT FELLOW SUBJECTS.  
AND TO THE  
PUBLIC IN GENERAL.

BRITISH MUSEUM



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AN  
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FROM THE  
GENERAL COMMITTEE  
OF  
*K/Ireland* ROMAN CATHOLICS,  
TO THEIR  
PROTESTANT FELLOW SUBJECTS,

AND TO THE  
PUBLIC IN GENERAL,  
RESPECTING  
THE CALUMNIES AND MISREPRESENTATIONS NOW SO INDUSTRIOUSLY CIRCULATED WITH REGARD TO THEIR  
PRINCIPLES AND CONDUCT.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,  
THE OATH TAKEN BY THE CATHOLICS OF THIS KINGDOM, AND THE OPINION OF FOREIGN COLLEGES RESPECTING CERTAIN TENETS IMPUTED TO ROMAN CATHOLICS.

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M.DCC.XCII.

AN

ADDRESSES

FROM THE

GENERAL COMMITTEE

OF

ROMAN CATHOLICS

TO THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF



PUBLIC IN GENERAL

RESPECTFULLY

THE COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES AND CONDUCT

TO THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES

AND THE

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*Dublin, 4th Feb. 1792.*

GENERAL COMMITTEE  
OF

ROMAN CATHOLICS,

EDWARD BYRNE, Esq; IN THE CHAIR.

RESOLVED, That this Committee has been informed, that reports have been circulated, that the application of the Catholics for relief, extends to unlimited and total emancipation; and that attempts have been made, wickedly, and falsely, to instil into the minds of the Protestants of this kingdom, an opinion, that our applications were preferred in a tone of menace.

Resolved, That several Protestant gentlemen, have expressed great satisfaction, on being individually informed of the real extent and respectful manner of the applications for relief,  
have

have assured us, that nothing could have excited jealousy, or apparent opposition to us, from our Protestant countrymen, but the above-mentioned misapprehensions,

Resolved, That we therefore deem it necessary to declare, that the whole of our late applications, whether to his Majesty's ministers, to men in power, or to private members of the legislature, as well as our intended petition, neither did nor does contain any thing, or extend further, either in substance or in principle, than the four following objects.

1st, Admission to the profession and practice of the law.

2d, Capacity to serve in county magistracies.

3d, A right to be summoned and to serve on grand and petty juries.

4th, The right of voting in counties ONLY, for PROTESTANT Members of Parliament; in such a manner, however, as that a Roman Catholic freeholder should not vote unless he  
either

either rented, and cultivated a farm of *twenty pounds* per annum, in addition to his *forty-shilling* freehold, or else possessed a freehold to the amount of *twenty pounds* a year.

Resolved, That in our opinion, these applications, not extending to any other objects than the above, are moderate, and absolutely necessary for our general alleviation, and more particularly for the protection of the Catholic farmers and the peasantry of Ireland; and that they do not, in any degree, endanger either Church or State, or endanger the security of the Protestant interest.

Resolved, That we never had an idea or thought so extravagant, as that of menacing or intimidating our Protestant brethren, much less the legislature; and that we disclaim the violent and turbulent intentions imputed to us in some of the public prints, and circulated in private conversation.

Resolved, That we refer to the known disposition of the Roman Catholics of this kingdom, to our dutiful behaviour, during a long  
series

series of years, and particularly, to the whole tenor of our late proceedings for a full refutation of every charge of sedition and disloyalty.

Resolved, That for the more ample and detailed exposure of all the evil reports and calumnies, circulated against us, AN ADDRESS TO OUR PROTESTANT FELLOW-SUBJECTS, AND TO THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL, be printed by the order, and in the name of the General Committee.

Signed by Order,

RICHARD M'CORMICK, Secretary.



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A N

A D D R E S S, &c.

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**W**HEREAS reports for some time past have been circulated, extremely prejudicial to the honour and most important interests of the Roman Catholics of Ireland; whereby great uneasinesses and suspicions have been excited in the public mind, and civil and religious animosities have been set on float, to the manifest danger, if not of the public peace, at least of the good will and affection, which ought to subsist between the subjects of the same sovereign. Although we are conscious that no just grounds of reproach exist against us; yet as it is in the power of every man to revive dormant prejudices, by resorting to calumnies which if not repelled may gain credit with the unwary, we are compelled, however reluctantly, to meet the discussion, and to take issue

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with



with our detractors. We did imagine we might have flattered ourselves it would not have been necessary. The memory of the civil contentions, in which, our ancestors were engaged, and of which no traces remain, except in the laws enacted against us, cannot be supposed to furnish any reasonable cause of resentment at this day. Those wars did not arise from religious diversity alone, but were complicated with many causes (which are long since extinct) common to other persuasions, though we alone have paid the forfeit. But if the crime had been peculiar to our predecessors, it ought to make no impression to our disadvantage, because there is no religious persuasion, and no party division into which a nation can be cast, which in some period has not opposed the course of lawful authority: which offence if it was to rest for ever on their heads, and could be obliterated by no length of time or subsequent merit, civil discords being multiplied without end, would descend from generation to generation; the social bond be entirely broken by every casual rent, and the evils of transitory dissension confirmed into eternal hostility. As every civil action and every criminal prosecution has its period of limitation, and ends at least with the life of man; so we conceive that the period of one hundred years is a sufficient limitation against penalties

nalties on the stigma of a rebellion, committed neither by ourselves, nor by our immediate ancestors. During this long protracted period of our severe and tedious purgation; what have we not done and suffered, to wash away the stains of this imputed guilt? We have endeavoured to imitate the example of the great Captain of our salvation, by bowing down our heads in silent sorrow to the afflictions, by which (according to the corruption of our unhappy nature) individual malice had sharpened the rage of angry laws. We had flattered ourselves that our meekness and patience, had disarmed animosity of every pretext, at least of every reason. Enlarged and liberal ideas began to gain ground in this kingdom, as well as in the rest of Europe. The legislature had already, in several instances, extended the protecting influence of the laws, to this forlorn and segregated member of the commonwealth. Moreover Parliament had authentically declared “ That the relaxations of the *disabilities* and *incapacities*, to which we were subject, was *reasonable and expedient*, in consequence of *our uniform peaceable behaviour* for a long series of years \*.” From these and many other considerations we were induced to hope that every description of our Protestant brethren, would have seen us with eyes of brotherly affec-

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tion,

\* 17 and 18 Geo. 3.

tion, and instead of obstructing, would have greeted our approach, and zealously forwarded our steps in the road pointed out to us by Parliament itself—which, in the distinct language of legislative authority had pronounced that “it would tend (not to the subversion of any establishment) but “to the *improvement of this kingdom*, and to the prosperity and *strength* of all his Majesty’s dominions, that his subjects *of all denominations* should enjoy the blessings of our FREE CONSTITUTION, and should be bound to each other by mutual interest and mutual affection.”

And so we are convinced it would have been, if the most subtle, and at the same time, the most powerful exertions had not been employed, to poison and alarm the public mind. Dark and cruel surmises have been dispersed abroad. The ears of men have been filled with imputations of sedition and turbulence. Sophistic arguments derived from a mixture of confused ideas and false principles, have been fabricated, to traduce our motives, and to misconstrue our legal and temperate pursuit of rational liberty, into a struggle for unjust domination. An alarm has been sounded throughout the kingdom, of danger to the Church and State; and every artifice employed, which could be calculated to flatter and irritate the passions, and

to excite the fears of our Protestant brethren. As these arts have produced an effect even beyond expectation, and the excess of which their authors may now perhaps regret, it is impossible for us to remain silent. If indeed we condescended to imitate the ways of our detractors, we might shift off this necessity. But as they, knowing the injustice of their charges, have maligned us only by oblique insinuations; so we conscious of our own integrity, are not afraid to take those accusations upon ourselves, and fairly to meet their indirect attack.

In the first place it is incumbent upon us to reduce the confused mass of obliquy, which has been heaped upon us, into some kind of certainty, both in its substance and in its application. We shall afterwards examine the grounds of it. For this purpose we are to premise, that a division, in the Catholic body, has been artfully imagined, and strongly insisted upon; of which one part is honoured with the appellation of the *real Catholics*; the men of *birth, property, education, character, morals, and understanding*. The other part is represented, as *a base, unlettered, mechanical, poor, and vulgar herd*; the obscure tenants of the counting-house, and the rude tillers of the soil—men incapable of comprehending the principles

principles of society, or the ties of moral obligation.

First, it is proper to remark, that the distribution and contra-distinction of men which is here supposed, implies an entire and *previous* dissolution of the social bond, and one, which if ever it takes place, can only exist for the destruction of the superior class. But fortunately for the prosperity, the peace, and the honour of Ireland, no such division has yet been effected among the Roman Catholics. It is true indeed, that a *division* (if the defection of so small a number can be called a division) has been fomented, and yet subsists, which however it is to be lamented upon other grounds, is not of the nature above described. Two parties are seen amongst us; one composed of those who, (from motives best known to themselves) have been induced to put their hands to the address of the 17th of December; for which act Lord Kenmare, has been declared unworthy of our confidence: The other party consists on one hand, of this Committee, (delegated for the purpose of transacting the concerns of the Roman Catholics) and on the other, of all those who have come forward in various resolutions of approbation to this Committee, and of abhorrence of the imputations which

Lord



Lord Kenmare's address, has obliquely thrown upon us, but which many of the addressers themselves, have since honourably disclaimed.

Of these two parties it is evident, that the pompous and encomiastic side of the picture above delineated, is meant to apply to the followers of Lord Kenmare; the vilifying and opprobrious expressions relate to this Committee, and to those who have supported it. Before we proceed to expose the injustice of this application in both its parts, we wish to have it understood, that in discharging ourselves from illiberal reflections, we only mean to reject those which imply some evil moral quality. We should be far from the mean and insolent vanity, so unbecoming a christian and a man, of taking pride in the accidents of birth, wealth, and education, in whatever degree we might possess them. We do not account ourselves better than those whom perhaps a kinder providence, has placed in the most humble life, and who serve their generation with a more obscure, or a less successful industry. Why should indigence be insulted? We do not despise the poor, nor him who with the sweat of his brow, bears all the burden of the common curse. Our actions will

will shew, that we are not willing to sacrifice for objects of avarice and ambition to ourselves and to our children, the necessary security, the just importance, the protecting franchise of the man, whose hard toil obtains from our mother Earth the very bread we eat. When, therefore, it is asserted, that we are only the *unlettered, poor, mechanical* members of our persuasion; we deny it only because it is not the fact. As far as it regards ourselves, the imposture is less material. But when it is considered, that it is not this Committee alone, who are represented as destitute of property, character, and knowledge, incapable of discerning social good or public utility; but that all the Roman Catholics, who have stood forth on this occasion, the principal merchants of so many trading cities, the householders of all the parishes of this capital, the landed proprietors of so many counties, are involved in this indiscriminate reproach of meanness, poverty and ignorance — common sense, and the feelings of mankind exact from us an authentic assertion of the truth. We declare then, and we are warranted in declaring, that the names and characters of the persons who have signed resolutions in favour of the General Committee, are of the first respectability in every

every class, and every line which the law has left open to us. Let those who have read their resolutions themselves judge of their capacity, and say whether they are, as has been insinuated, below the standard of the human faculties, and incapable of political combinations, or even of appreciating their own wants, and their own grievances.

It has been represented that they have *no stake in the prosperity of their country, and nothing to hazard in the event of public calamity*. If we are to speak of their substance, to bring the estimate within the lowest possible calculation, we cannot compute the property of those who have already signed resolutions in our favour, (to say nothing of ourselves, or of those who are yet to sign) at less than TEN MILLIONS STERLING ; we should come nearer the truth, if we should say TWENTY MILLIONS. If mercantile, and personal wealth constitutes the greater part of this sum, it is because the property of the Roman Catholics is principally vested in trade, and that we have been long incapable, and are but lately qualified to acquire real estates. But though providence has not frowned upon our humble industry, we repeat it again, that we solicit relief not for the sake of the rich, but for the sake of the poor. And if we were all sunk (as too many of

us are) in one dreary lot of hopeless poverty, we should only possess a stronger claim to the charities of parliament, and one argument more for a participation in equal laws.

But it is said these addressers are the LANDED INTEREST. A landed interest is certainly respectable and deserves much, but not the whole attention of a legislature; that is to say, where it is united, and not when it is in a state of unnatural separation from the general mass of property. It so happens, however, that a much *greater* proportion of *that very property* is with the Committee, than with the followers of Lord Kenmare. But after all, what is the hereditary landed interest of the Roman Catholics, unrecruited by commercial industry, and recent acquisition? It is the remnant of five hundred years civil contention, the miserable reliques of the vexatious process of a code of laws, whose professed object it was to annihilate that very interest; to dissipate the possessions, and break the spirit of the possessors. What quantity of public virtue and political judgment is left in those whom envy has driven, or artifices have debauched from the most sacred of all connections, the society of common oppressions, we leave for others to decide. But it seems to us, that to dilate on the vast domains, the extensive

tensive and lordly influence, the enlarged faculties, and the active penetrating genius of the Roman Catholic *gentry* (however it may be intended) could be a mockery, and a cruel sarcasm on broken fortunes, and minds debilitated by a series of hereditary degradation.—So much on the subject of property.

We have done with the reflections cast on our circumstances and condition in life. We now proceed to shew, that the principles and conduct imputed to us, are equally destitute of foundation. It is said that we are turbulent and seditious, that we have formed regular *plans* for the *intimidation* of Parliament, and that instead of making application for *favours*, we assert claims of *right*, of *speculative right* unknown to the constitution and subversive of society. These are the charges; we are not afraid to repeat them. Whether we intimidate, or are ourselves the object of intimidation, is for those to pronounce who hear the imputations with which we are covered, and the vengeance which is denounced against us. What have we done, or what are we able to do, which makes it necessary for the newspapers and pamphlets of the day, to threaten us with the unfolded terrors of Irish, and even of British power? This we conceive is some-



thing like intimidation. But why is it, that while on one side we are reprobated as *vile*, and as of no account in the scale of public judgment; on the other, we are treated as enemies of the most dreadful importance? Such are the inconsistencies into which our enemies are hurried. It is the perturbation of the passions.—

But to consider the charge more particularly, the first question to be asked, when we hear of this formidable confederacy against the constitution in Church and State—is, Who are the principals? who the accomplices? We shall afterwards consider the criminal fact, and the means of execution. As we can derive no sort of indication from any direct fact, we collect from many collateral circumstances, that the parties alluded to, are this General Committee, as *principals*; and as *accessories*, those who think, and in various resolutions have expressed that Lord Kenmare's address was surreptitious, insidious and servile. We will trouble the public with a few words as to the quality and character of these two descriptions of persons.

As to the COMMITTEE we are to observe, that if it is an improper, it is at least no recent institution. It was formed about twenty years ago, under the immediate eye, and tacit sanction of government. From that time forward, all the parliamentary

ary and general business of the Roman Catholics, has been transacted through that channel by every minister, and every public man, to this very day. If we had been willing to palter with our trust, it might still have been, and will again be so, as often as *any knowledge of the circumstances of a people is considered as a necessary preliminary to their relief.* We will venture to say that it is a useful institution; and until we are no longer separated from the general mass of the people, until we are included in one general protecting system, it is an institution subsidiary to the ends of good government, and necessary not only to the well-being, to the moral œconomy, and to the whole internal ordinance of this great and neglected portion of the intire community. Be it however remembered, that this General Committee arrogates to itself *no* corporate capacity whatever: But we contend that all men who separate in their abodes, having a common concern, can only transact it by deputing, and by convening; whatever may be the appellation of their assemblages. There have been committees of merchants, and committees of traders, of tobacco-nists, of sugar-bakers, of fustian weavers, of leather-dressers, and of all sorts of men of all descriptions, who ever have had a public and parliamentary concern both in England and in Ireland. Committees

mittees of Protestants as there is a committee of Catholics—Bodies not recognized by the severe dignity of legislation—but acted with by individual members for the indispensable convenience of business. Such is our General Committee.

With regard to those, who in other parts have approved of their Committee, (and are considered as a sort of accessory to its delinquency) their conduct we can say with confidence is liable to no objection. It is shortly this—The Roman Catholics at large had instructed us to make application to Parliament for relief. While we were conscientiously discharging this sacred trust, in the most assiduous, but at the same time (as we conceived) in the most safe, and in the least exceptionable manner, a scheme was formed (with what degree of honour we leave for the present to the hearts of its authors) to involve the defeat of our cause, in the ruin of our reputation and character. It was industriously circulated, that we were a set of low and turbulent citizens—not charged with the interests, nor impressed with the sentiments of the Roman Catholics.—A rabble of shop-keepers, convened to propagate confusion. To give countenance to this idea, an address was procured from

from several gentlemen, (with Lord Kenmare at their head) whose property was to be *construed* into *presumptive representation* of the whole Roman Catholic body. Similar addresses, and with a similar view, were solicited in every part of the kingdom—not *professing* indeed to speak the voice, but calculated obliquely to convey this delusive idea to the public, and to the throne. What it was free for one man to assert, it was open to another to deny. If it was proper to mistake a notorious and important public fact, it was allowable to state it truly. Nor was it surprising that the Roman Catholics should come forward, as it were with one consent, to disclaim an unwarranted assumption of their name in the equivocal phraseology—under the false disguise of an address to the crown, and to avow an authorised use of it by this Committee. If it was illegal for Roman Catholics to form meetings, and to come to resolutions on public affairs, the first meetings and the first resolutions were made not by us, nor by our supporters, but by those whose approved loyalty is necessary, it seems, to redeem our sedition. We only imitated an example set us by the addressers themselves, and too much encouraged not to be somewhat sanctioned by authority. So much for the persons concerned; now as to our deeds.

When

When the ears of those who live at a distance from the capital, are wounded with dreadful tidings of turbulence and sedition, they will naturally enquire, what riots, what tumults, what commotions have broken the 'daily' occupations, or disturbed the nocturnal repose of this metropolis? There has not been the smallest symptom of the kind. Is it then, some plot, some secret conspiracy, some dark machination, providentially brought to light, against the life of the sovereign, or the being of the state? None, none of these. What then is this foul offence which has spread such a wide and terrible alarm? It has been *reported*—as yet it is little more than a report—that the General Committee *intend* to solicit a right—a *qualified* right of suffrage—in *one*, and that the *smallest* part of the representation—the county elections. This is the enormous fact which, “roars so loud and thunders in the index;”—the very thought of which has shaken the public mind with terror and affright. If this desire, as yet rather imagined than expressed, does not quite constitute the crime of sedition, the next question is, What are the concomitant acts, the dreadful accompaniment of criminal circumstance, which has converted a mere suggestion



suggestion, and such a suggestion, into a crime of state. The Roman Catholics at large will be surprised to hear that these heavy imputations are charged, upon no act of ours, real or pretended; but that the acts of sedition, charged to our account, are neither more nor less than *the public resolutions*, which they themselves have voted, to avow our proceedings and to exculpate both themselves and us (the great body of the Roman Catholics) from sedition and turbulence. Behold then the situation in which we stand. *We are accused of turbulent intentions, and of unwarrantably assuming to speak the sentiments of the Catholics.* Are the Roman Catholics silent? Then we are condemned, of course. Do they come forward to avow us? Then their convening to give a *public testimony to the truth*, becomes a proof of turbulence *in them and in us*. Thus are we circumvented, and such the traps with which our steps are waylaid. We are falsely accused by some, and treacherously betrayed by others, not because we are guilty, but in hopes that the unsuspecting warmth of innocence aspersed, should betray us into something, which a watchful malice may convert into a crime.

On the subject of sedition and turbulence, we desire our enemies (for enemies it seems we have)

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to come to the proof. We are at issue with them. We have done nothing; we, nor the Roman Catholics of Ireland, which has not been in the face of day. Let *our proceedings*, let *our resolutions* be examined, and let it be seen whether they contain one expression, or breath one sentiment which loyalty does not warrant, and which does not flow from the warmest patriotism, regulated by the most scrupulous observance of the law. Do they disparage any one name of magistracy, or militate with any one principle of authority? As these resolutions have come at once from every quarter of the kingdom, and bear in their expressions, the evident marks of peculiar and unprompted sentiments, it is clear that if any principle of sedition had lurked among the Catholics, in any corner of Ireland, they must have shewn themselves in this sudden and unprepared effusion. The very facts adduced to brand us with faction, afford the fullest and most brilliant evidence, of our cordial and obedient loyalty! We will venture to assert that no meetings have ever been held, on any subject of general concern (and such meetings are frequent, and perfectly legal) consisting of more reputable persons, or conducted with greater decency, order, and propriety.

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Notwithstanding this unexceptionable demeanor, in the great body of the Roman Catholics, whose voice we speak; and *although we ask no more than to be admitted to stand on the threshold of the constitution*, we are charged with a design to subvert the State, and to *intimidate* Parliament. The expression used against us, is vague and popular; which, however, *indicates* a species of offence, well known to the laws, and of the highest magnitude: an expression which contains just enough of legal certainty, to leave a brand of criminality; and is just sufficiently undefined, to evade the test of judicial inquiry. There is an offence in the law, which consists (as we are informed) in *constraining by force, the free will of the legislature or any branch of it*. It is committed by the application of imminent danger to the *persons* of the members, in their *aggregate* capacity—an *actual* not a *constructive* force—a *present and probable*, not a *remote and contingent danger*. We are not lawyers, but we are sure that this is sense, and is therefore, probably, law: If we have committed this crime, why are we not convicted? If we have not committed it, why are we by indirect implication, loaded with an insidious and undefined suspicion of it? We neither have, nor could have had any inducement to incur this great and perilous guilt, and therefore we ought not to be suspected. If our proceedings were ambiguous, (which they are

not) the moderation of our demands, is sufficient to exculpate our mode of demanding. We ask only the *smallest possible participation* in the constitution. And who would expose himself to the utmost penalties of the law, and yet not grasp at all that was to be had? Shall we do it for a part, *of a part*, of an octennial franchise? But it is answered, "the minute principle of acquisition, you now seek, by a series of argumentative deduction, and in the maturity of time, will grow into an important magnitude." To which we reply, that no man, and that no set of men, ever committed crimes, great or small, in order to lay the foundation of a distant and precarious profit. The gains of guilt must be great and sudden, like the passions which stimulate, and the temptations which allure. We have no dangers to incur; we have no ambition to gratify. The loyal integrity of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, shall be fortified on every side. The objects of their pursuit are such as secure their means of attainment from a shadow of suspicion; and their means of attainment shall be such as would add lustre to the brightest, and clear away the ambiguity even of a doubtful purpose.

We confess, that we are at a loss to divine on what facts this alarm and outcry of intimidation

tion can be founded. We have done nothing : No Roman Catholic has done, or proposes to do any thing, but to make an exposition of his true situation, to the humanity, to the justice, to the judgment of our fellow-subjects, of our sovereign and his Parliament. Is this intimidation ? Is it sedition or commotion, direct or indirect ? On what principle is it pretended ? Must we lock up our sorrows in our hearts ; and are we alone denied the free unrestrained indulgence of complaint—the consolation, of wretchedness, and the privilege of slavery itself ? Are we not to argue, are we not even to state our case ? Are our grievances of a kind, or is our relation to the laws of our country such, that to dilate on their tendency and operation, would harrow up the soul of man, and set in action all the secret springs and seeds of insurrection ? And is the lot of our people so bad, is their comparative condition so wholly desolate, that to direct their attention to the enjoyments of their countrymen and fellow-subjects, and to suggest the possession of similar advantages, is to kindle in their breasts the fire of an unextinguishable ambition ? Alas ! we are afraid it is almost too true. We do, indeed, labour under legal incapacities, infinite in number, and boundless in extent. They wring us in a thousand places, and in a thousand shapes. This mass of unwieldy  
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and severe exclusion is supported by prejudices, rooted in antiquity, hereditary and transmissive, engrained by education, and confirmed by habit. What are we to do? We know that God has given lamentation to woe, sollicitation to desire, importunity to want; images of distress to affect the feelings, and argument to conquer prejudice. These are the instincts of nature, the armory of our hearts, to defend and to relieve us from oppression. And shall we not use them? If this is sedition, if it is sedition to address ourselves to the sensibility, to the justice, to the patriotism, to the honour, to the gratitude, to the interests of our countrymen; If it is sedition to indicate the points in which we are more peculiarly galled by the pressure of unequal laws: To shew that our excommunication from the liberties of our country, taints the source and impairs the essence of those very liberties; If to demonstrate that restrictions upon the free use of the property, which industry has acquired, and the talents which God has given; To prove that the long catalogue of our disabilities and incapacities, are so many clogs, bars, and remoras to the course of national prosperity; and, If it is a crime against the State, to make it appear, that the disfranchisement of *THREE MILLION of the people*, is a void and hollow chasm, which has yawned for a hundred years, and yet yawns at the foot of the throne, and under the foundation of the established

blished church : If to suggest the natural, evident, happy, effectual, safe and universal remedy for all those evils, be to intimidate Parliament, we are guilty of the charge. What is worse, we do not know how we shall be able to avoid it in future. It is not in our power not to know, that we are estranged, as it were, and dead to the constitution. It is impossible for us not to desire, (if not a total emancipation) at least, that a *growing principle* may be established, by which we may once more be gathered into the bosom, and transfused into the circulation of the State. Whatever entreaty, whatever reason, whatever argument can do to effect it, we are bound at least to attempt; We are bound to ourselves, and to our country, to use and to exhaust whatever resources are to be found, in the fundamental laws of the land, in the rules of eternal justice, and in the more liberal, but equally certain sphere of national policy. And where does that growing principle reside? In the *elective franchise*, (that essence of a free constitution) and in that alone. Any even the minutest portion of that vivifying principle, that root of freedom, and source of public security, and of personal consequence,—“ binding us to our *fellow* subjects by mutual interest and mutual affection,” interweaving us in *all* the concernments of social life, in time must, and  
 alone

alone can wear out all distinctions, level all inequalities, and uniting the whole people in one bond of common prosperity and reciprocal obligation, cement the fabrick both of THE STATE and of THE CHURCH. For why should we wish to injure, or why should we not defend a church, the strength and ornament of that State from which it no longer excludes us?

It has been contended that in the pursuit of this just, rational, loyal, and constitutional object of our virtuous ambition; instead of relying on *solicitation* we assert a claim of right. We suppose that what is used as an objection is meant as a reproach, and we shall answer it as such, though it might better serve as a justification. The institution of a claim of *right* (the symbol of peace and order—the earliest emanation, and last result of the social union) seems to us not very well to accord with, but rather totally to wipe away the charge of sedition and turbulence. But if it were true (which it is not) that we had *demand*ed admission into the constitution as our *right*, we cannot help remarking, that it would have been only a reason for a more exact and scrupulous attention, to that our requisition. For in matters of mere grace and voluntary donation, which may be given or withheld at pleasure, it is optional to hear, or not to hear, the application. But when a claim  
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of *right* is made, the first law of society; the rule of immutable justice, require that it should be patiently heard, duly considered, and if it is just, that it should be solemnly adjudicated. If the name of right, that high principle coeval with the origin of things which actuates and guides the whole moral creation, has been perverted to evil (as what name so sacred has not been perverted) the sanctity of its character remains, and (as in all things) no argument from the abuse is to be drawn against the use. We beg leave to observe, that there is nothing in itself insolent or offensive in a claim of right. We have rights even as against the author of our existence; we have rights as against our parents, as against our fellow subjects, as against our king—as subsidiary to his justice, not as in derogation to his power. Rights are also of many sorts, defined and undefined; perfect and imperfect. For determining the rights we have against each other, are constructed the common forms of judicial tribunals. For those rights which affect our demands on the personal capacity of the king, we have the *Monstrans de Droit*, and the *Petitio Recti et Justitiæ*. For those which yet unascertained and imperfect, are  
either

either contained in the original compact of the state, or arise out of the new and ever varying combinations of society—those which touch the king, as father of his whole people, and connecting particular with public good; (if we have any constitutional right, we conceive ours to be of this species) for the adjudication of those rights we have the high court of Parliament. Our emancipation, total or gradual, like all things which depend upon the justice of legislative discretion, is of a mixed nature. If it was wholly a matter of right, we should have no occasion to apply for it. If we had no sort of right, no fair claim, no just pretensions to the privileges of this FREE CONSTITUTION, we should seek them in vain. Nor would the assertion of them as a right any way detract from the plenitude of legislative authority. For out of every relation arises a duty, and from every duty a right. And it is permitted to us to say that that very respect and devotion, by which we depend on the protection of Parliament, entitles us to the beneficent exercise of its functions. We may also add that if the ampler security of our lives, of our liberties and of our properties, the public prosperity, and the interest of the crown, require our admission into the constitution; we are very confident



confident that the justice of Parliament will not preclude its beneficence from granting our request, even though we should be so unfortunate as to misconceive it to be our *right*. It is not easy to maintain that one man has no right to that which other men are under a moral obligation to perform.

We do not abandon the ground of right, because we think it a part our case; and we will prove it to be so. But, at the same time, by the fullest tribute of our gratitude we will shew, that we receive every concession as flowing from the free unconstrained benignity of Parliament, and of our Sovereign. We consider ourselves as standing at once in the judgment, and in the mercy of Parliament; and as we shall omit no lawful means of obtaining a favourable sentence, we shall with resignation submit to that which is adverse. That great tribunal of general legislation will judge upon the merits of our case, and treat with a deserved contempt, as captious and futile all objections which go, not to the *substance*, but to *the mode and manner* of our application. It will pardon our errors and consider our wants. When it knows our desires, it will freely give what is proper for us to obtain, neither more nor less.

It

It has also been objected to us, (in order to fill up the measure of opinions) that we not only assert claims of right, but claims of *abstract and speculative* right. This is a charge, which though false, it is impossible for us to deny. With regard to us every sort of privilege is merely theoretical; an object of pure speculation. On those which are properly such, we mean to pass no opinion. But we desire to have it observed, that if the human mind can conceive a distinction between *practical* and *speculative* rights, the privileges of the BRITISH CONSTITUTION are PRACTICAL and *not* speculative. If we claim any rights it is those we claim. Whether to pretend to a speculative right be a crime of the highest magnitude, we leave others to determine. Those who charge us with it, and place it as the last step in the climax of aggravation, perhaps, imagine it to be so: they certainly fail in the proof of the fact: but though they cannot convict *us*, they confute themselves. The objection to our claims, as *speculative*, admits that it would be proper for us to assert the rights ESTABLISHED BY LAW and RECOGNIZED BY THE CONSTITUTION.—Even the malignity of adverse sophistry justifies us in claiming as *a right* that *elective franchise* which we solicit as a *grace*.

Having

Having now, we trust, sufficiently refuted the calumnies, and answered the objections that are made against us, we shall shortly advert to their general tendency and effect. It is unfortunately, and but too evidently, to alarm the minds of our Protestant fellow subjects; to draw still stronger the line of separation, and to revive those religious animosities which have kept us asunder. It is our duty to guard ourselves, and to put others on their guard, against all such designs. We most earnestly entreat, and solemnly adjure our Protestant brethren, of every description, to recollect the evils of religious discord; the effects of which we feel after a hundred years, when the acrimony of the dispute, and even the subject of it, is almost forgotten. It has preyed long enough on the vitals of our country. Why should our fellow-subjects view us with scornful and suspicious eyes? We desire them to appeal to the real sentiments of their own hearts, for our true dispositions and principles. If they have seen us in *private life*, honest, laborious, peaceable; faithful to our engagements, and just in our dealings: If they have acted with us upon that assurance, why do they suppose, when we desire to enter into a larger communication of the social benefits, that we are actuated by evil motives?

motives? If we have been found true in the routine of ordinary trusts, why should it be supposed that we shall prove false in that one superior covenant by which we all are bound to the state, and under which all the duties and all the engagements of life are comprehended? What they have known us to be, such still we are. We are not conspirators against the Church or State. We do not grudge to Protestants the advantages of constitutional rights. We desire to partake in them as benefits, in which the acquisition of one man, is not the detriment of another—free and common benefits. The constitution is large enough for us all. And let it be remembered that we ask the possession of *nothing*, and only a bare *capacity* to acquire; and that not, extending to all things, but limited even in those to which it does extend.

As to the arguments by which the foresight of suspicion, prognosticates our *gradual encroachment*, first, and then our *final usurpation*; as to the infringement which our emancipation would make *upon the Protestant interest and ascendancy*; as to the suggested *danger of the Church or of the State*, and as to the *insecurity of titles*, and the *resumption of forfeited lands by a repeal of the act of settlement*—to all these chimerical apprehensions,

we

we pledge ourselves to our Protestant fellow-subjects, and to the public in general, *that a clear, full, and satisfactory answer shall be given.* As we confine ourselves, at present, to the refutation of calumnies, we shall only observe, with regard to the idea of our *future encroachment*, and *probable usurpation*, that if the common frailties of human nature, are expected to run in our case, to more than ordinary lengths, it is open to legislative prudence to put an absolute and final limit to our possible acquisitions. The laws in being against us, are founded on that very principle; *viz.* that securities are to be found in *restriction*. We only contend that those at present existing, confine us within much more narrow bounds, than is necessary for their object, and such as defeat the end.—We have examples of other states and kingdoms, in which established religions, are preserved amidst great and numerous diversities of sects; and yet where all things are open to all men, with some very few, but those perhaps necessary exceptions. With regard to us, unfortunately the exception is converted into the rule. We have thought it proper here to allude to the practice of other countries, to shew that we are ourselves willing, to point out securities against our own eventual ambition,



ambition, which may be more effectual, because more judicious than our present incapacities, and which will neither trench upon private freedom, nor impair public strength. But we if know (and surely we do know) ourselves, the present disposition of our habit, is not to breed ambition. Emancipation is our only, our ultimate, our distant scope. We stand in need of nutriment to our exhausted strength, not correctives to an overweening desire of sway. These things we now but just touch upon. We have much to say to our Protestant brethren, and we trust we shall find a suitable audience. At present, time does not permit. To their candour, justice, liberality, and brotherly affection we refer ourselves, for the favourable interpretation of all our discourses and of all our actions.

Printed by order of the General Committee,

RICHARD M'CORMICK, SEC.

O A T H

## O A T H

OF THE

*ROMAN CATHOLICS of IRELAND.*

“ I *A. B.* do take Almighty God and his  
 “ only Son Jesus Christ my Redeemer to wit-  
 “ ness, That I will be faithful and bear true al-  
 “ legiance to our most gracious sovereign Lord  
 “ King George the Third, and him will defend  
 “ to the utmost of my power against all conspi-  
 “ racies and attempts whatever, that shall be  
 “ made against his person, crown, and dignity ;  
 “ and I will do my utmost endeavour to dis-  
 “ close and make known to his Majesty, and  
 “ his heirs, all treasons and traiterous conspira-  
 “ cies, which may be formed against him or  
 “ them ; and I do faithfully promise to main-  
 “ tain, support and defend, to the utmost of  
 “ my power the succession of the crown in his  
 “ Majesty’s family against any person or per-  
 “ sons whatsoever ; hereby utterly renouncing  
 “ and abjuring any obedience or allegiance unto  
 “ the person taking upon himself the stile and  
 “ title of prince of Wales in the lifetime of his  
 “ father, and who since his death is said to  
 “ have assumed the stile and title of king of

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“ Great

“ Great Britain and Ireland by the name of  
 “ Charles the Third, and to any other person  
 “ claiming or pretending a right to the crown  
 “ of these realms; and I do swear, that I do  
 “ REJECT AND DETEST AS UNCHRISTIAN AND  
 “ IMPIOUS TO BELIEVE, *that it is lawful to mur-*  
 “ *der or destroy any person or persons whatsoever for*  
 “ *or under pretence of their being heretics; and*  
 “ *also that* UNCHRISTIAN AND IMPIOUS PRIN-  
 “ CIPLE, THAT NO FAITH IS TO BE KEPT WITH  
 “ HERETICS; I further declare, that it is *no*  
 “ article of my faith, and that I do RENOUNCE,  
 “ REJECT, AND ABJURE *the opinion, that princes*  
 “ *excommunicated by the Pope and council, or by any*  
 “ *authority of the see of Rome, or by any authority*  
 “ *whatsoever, may be deposed or murdered by*  
 “ *their subjects, or by any person whatsoever;*  
 “ and I do promise, that I will not hold,  
 “ maintain, or abet, any such opinion, or any  
 “ other opinion, contrary to what is expressed  
 “ in this declaration; and I do declare, *that I*  
 “ *do not believe,* that the Pope of Rome, or  
 “ any other foreign prince, prelate, state, or  
 “ potentate *hath or ought to have any temporal*  
 “ *or civil jurisdiction,* power, superiority, or  
 “ pre-eminence, directly or indirectly, within  
 “ this realm; and I do solemnly in the pre-  
 “ sence of God, and of his only Son Jesus  
 “ Christ,

" Christ, my Redeemer, profess, testify, and  
 " declare, that I do make this declaration, and  
 " every part thereof, in the plain and ordinary  
 " sense of the words of this oath, without any  
 " evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation  
 " whatever, and without any dispensation al-  
 " ready granted by the Pope, or any authority  
 " of the see of Rome, or any person whatever ;  
 " and without thinking that I am or can be ac-  
 " quitted before God or man, or absolved of  
 " this declaration, or any part thereof, although  
 " the Pope, or any other person or persons, or  
 " authority whatsoever shall dispense with or  
 " annul the same, or declare that it was null  
 " and void from the beginning.

So help me God.

QUERIES TO FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES,  
WITH THEIR ANSWERS.

When the Committee of the English Catholics (for they had a Committee with whom the *English* Ministers of the Crown did not disdain to communicate) waited on Mr. Pitt, he *requested* to be furnished with authentic evidence of the opinions of the Catholic Clergy, and the Catholic Universities abroad, "With respect to the existence and extent of the Pope's dispensing power." Three questions were accordingly framed and sent to the Universities of Paris, Louvain, Alcala, Doway, Salamanca, and Valladolid, for their opinions.

The queries and answers are as follows.

THE QUERIES.

Has the Pope, or Cardinals, or any body of men, or any individual of the Church of Rome, any civil authority, power, jurisdiction, or pre-eminence whatsoever, within the realm of England?

2. Can the Pope, or Cardinals, or any body of men, or any individual of the Church of Rome,



Rome, absolve or dipense with his Majesty's subjects from their oath of allegiance, upon any pretext whatsoever ?

3. Is there any principle in the tenets of the Catholic Faith, by which Catholics are justified in not keeping faith with Heretics, or other persons differing from them in religious opinions, in any transaction, either of a public or a private nature ?

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*Abstract from the answer of the Sacred Faculty of Divinity of Paris to the above Queries*

AFTER an introduction according to the usual forms of the university, they answer the first query by declaring :—

Neither the *Pope, nor the Cardinals, nor any body of men*, nor any other person of the Church of Rome hath any *civil authority, civil power, civil jurisdiction, or civil pre-eminence* whatsoever in *any* kingdom ; and, consequently, none in the kingdom of England, by reason or virtue of any authority, power, jurisdiction, or pre-eminence by divine institution inherent in, or granted, or by any other means  
 belonging

belonging to the Pope, or the Church of Rome. This doctrine the Sacred Faculty of Divinity of Paris has always held, and upon every occasion maintained, and upon every occasion has rigidly proscribed the contrary doctrines from her schools.

Answer to the second query.—Neither the *Pope, nor the Cardinals, nor any body of men,* nor any person of the Church of Rome, can, by virtue of the keys, absolve or release the subjects of the King of England from their oath of allegiance.

This and the first query are so intimately connected, that the answer of the first immediately and naturally applies to the second, &c.

Answer to the third query.—There is no tenet in the Catholic Church, by which Catholics are justified in not keeping faith with Heretics, or those who differ from them in matters of religion. The tenet, that it is lawful to break faith with Heretics, is so repugnant to common honesty and the opinions of Catholics, that *there is nothing of which those who have defended the Catholic Faith against Protestants, have complained more heavily, than the malice*

*malice and calumny of their adversaries in imputing this tenet to them, &c. &c. &c.*

Given at Paris in the General Assembly of the Sorbonne, held on Thursday the 11th day before the calends of March 1789.

Signed in due form.

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UNIVERSITY OF DOWAY.

*Jan. 5; 1789.*

*At a Meeting of the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Doway, &c. &c.*

TO the first and second queries the Sacred Faculty answers—That no power whatsoever, in civil or temporal concerns, was given by the Almighty, either to the Pope, the Cardinals, or the Church herself, and, consequently, that Kings and Sovereigns are not in temporal concerns, subject, by the ordination of God, to any ecclesiastical power whatsoever; neither can their subjects, by any authority granted to the Pope or the Church, from above, be freed from their obedience, or absolved from their oath of allegiance.

This

This is the doctrine which the doctors and professors of divinity hold and teach in our schools, and this all the candidates for degrees in divinity maintain in their public theses, &c. &c. &c.

To the third question the Sacred Faculty answers—That there is no principle of the Catholic Faith, by which Catholics are justified in not keeping faith with Heretics, who differ from them in religious opinion. On the contrary, it is *the unanimous doctrine* of Catholics, that the respect due to the name of God so called to witness, requires that the oath be inviolably kept, to whomsoever it is pledged, whether Catholic, Heretic, or Infidel, &c. &c. &c.

Signed and sealed in due form.

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#### UNIVERSITY OF LOUVAIN.

THE Faculty of Divinity at Louvain, having been requested to give her opinion upon the questions above stated, does it with readiness—but *struck with astonishment that such questions should, at the end of this eighteenth century, be proposed to any learned Body, by inhabitants of a king-*

*a kingdom that glories in the talents and discernment of its natives.* The Faculty being assembled for the above purpose, it is agreed with the unanimous assent of all voices to answer the first and second queries absolutely in the negative.

The Faculty does not think it incumbent upon her in this place to enter upon the proofs of her opinion, or to shew how it is supported by passages in the Holy Scriptures, or the writings of antiquity. That has already been done by Bossuet, De Marca, the two Barclays, Goldastus, the Pithæuses, Argentre Widrington, and his Majesty King James the First, in his Dissertation against Bellarmine and Du Perron, and by many others, &c. &c. &c.

The Faculty then proceeds to declare that the sovereign power of the state is in no wise (not even indirectly as it is termed) subject to, or dependant upon, any other power; though it be a spiritual power, or even though it be instituted for eternal salvation, &c. &c.

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That



That *no man nor any assembly of men* however eminent in dignity and power, not even the *whole body of the Catholic Church*, though assembled in general council, can upon any ground or pretence whatsoever, weaken the bond of union between the sovereign and the people; still less can they absolve or free the subjects from their Oath of Allegiance.

Proceeding to the third question, the said Faculty of Divinity (in perfect wonder that such a question should be proposed to her) most positively and unequivocally answers That there is not, and there never has been, among the Catholics, or in the doctrines of the Church of Rome, any law or principle which makes it lawful for Catholics to break their faith with Heretics, or others of a different persuasion from themselves in matters of Religion, either in public or private concerns.

The Faculty declares the doctrine of the Catholics to be, that the Divine and Natural Law, which makes it a duty to keep faith and promises, is the same; and is neither shaken nor diminished, if those with whom the engagement

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ment is made, hold erroneous opinions in matters of religion, &c. &c.

Signed in due form on the 18th of November, 1788.

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### UNIVERSITY OF ALCALA.

TO the first question it is answered—That none of the persons mentioned in the proposed question, either individually, or collectively in council assembled, have any right in civil matters; but that all civil power, jurisdiction and pre-eminence are derived from inheritance, election, the consent of the people, and other such titles of that nature.

To the second it is answered, in like manner—That none of the persons above-mentioned have a power to absolve the subjects of his Britannic Majesty from their Oaths of Allegiance.

To the third question it is answered—That the Doctrine which would exempt Catholics from the obligation of keeping faith with Heretics, or with any other persons who dissent from them in matters of religion, instead of be-

ing an article of Catholic Faith, is entirely repugnant to its tenets.

Signed in the usual form,  
March 17th, 1789.

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#### UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA.

TO the first question it is answered—That *neither Pope, nor Cardinals, nor any assembly or individual of the Catholic Church*, have, as such, any civil authority, power, jurisdiction or pre-eminence in the kingdom of England.

To the second it is answered—That neither Pope nor Cardinals, nor any assembly or individual of the Catholic Church, can as such, absolve the subjects of Great Britain from their Oaths of Allegiance, or dispense with its obligations.

To the third it is answered—That it is no article of Catholic faith, with Heretics, or with persons, of any other description, who dissent from them in matters of religion.

Signed in the usual form,  
March 7th, 1789.

## UNIVERSITY OF VALLADOLID.

TO the first question it is answered—*That neither Pope, Cardinals, or even a General Council, have any civil authority, power, jurisdiction or pre-eminence, directly or indirectly, in the kingdom of Great Britain ; or over any other kingdom or province in which they possess no temporal dominion.*

To the second it is answered—That neither Pope nor Cardinals, nor even a General Council, can absolve the subjects of Great Britain from their Oaths of Allegiance, or dispense with their obligation.

To the third it is answered—That the obligation of keeping faith is grounded on the law of nature, which binds all men equally, without respect to their religious opinions ; and with regard to Catholics, it is still more cogent, as it is confirmed by the principles of their religion.

Signed in the usual form,  
February 17th, 1789.

F I N I S.

